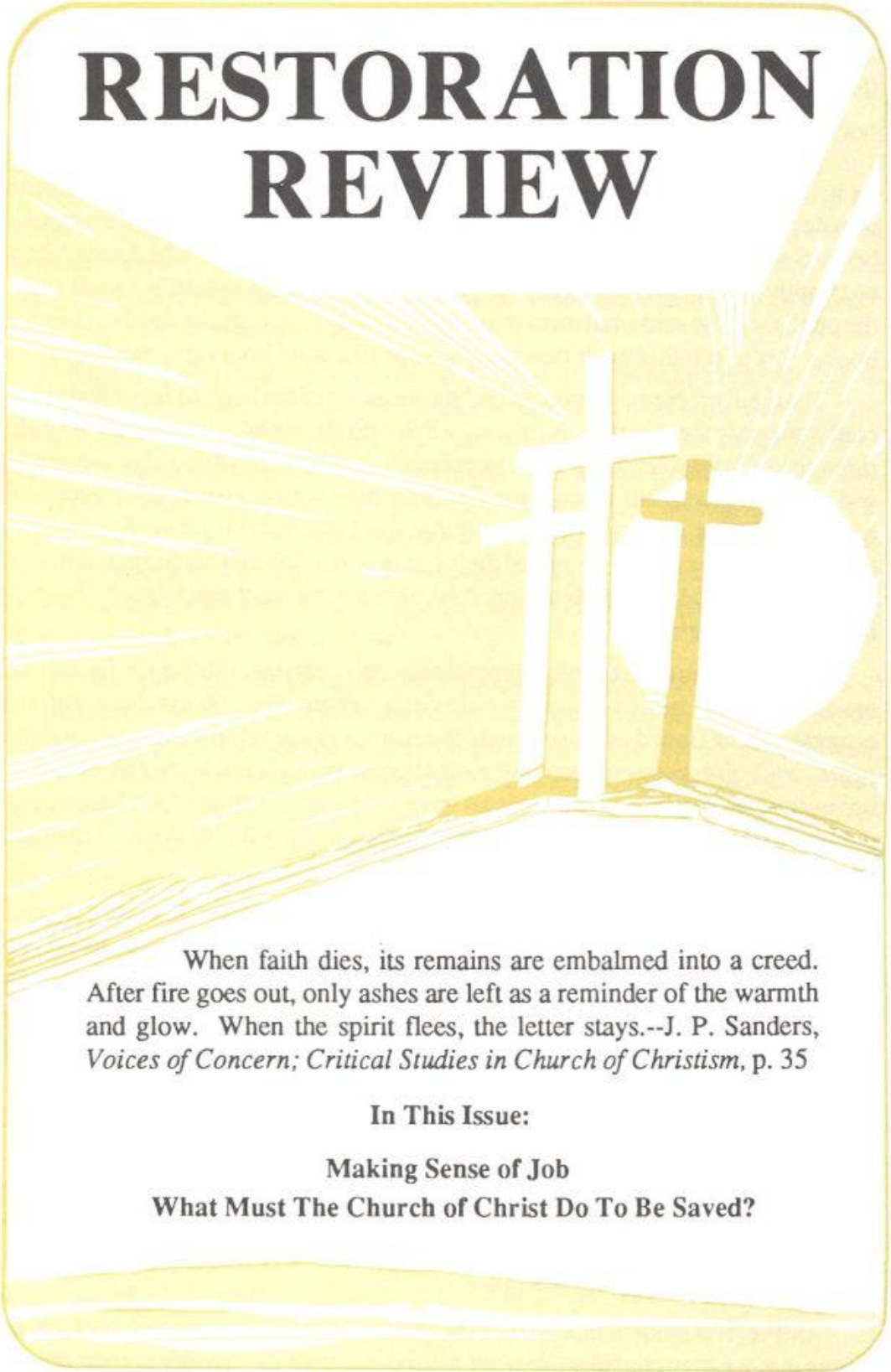
RESTORATION REVIEW



When faith dies, its remains are embalmed into a creed. After fire goes out, only ashes are left as a reminder of the warmth and glow. When the spirit flees, the letter stays.--J. P. Sanders, *Voices of Concern; Critical Studies in Church of Christism*, p. 35

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No.3

MAKING SENSE OF JOB

The book of Job has a way of intimidating those who venture to get a handle on it. A Scottish Old Testament scholar tells how after teaching the book for two decades to college students he supposed he would be able to get the meaning of the book down on paper once he wrote his commentary on it But he found himself constantly revising his conclusions and never quite ready to turn his work over to the publisher. He said what most must feel when they try to get inside this enigmatic book, “Try to pin this book down and it slips like sand between your fingers.”

The main problem in trying to find the meaning of the book of Job is that it never really answers the question it raises—Why do the righteous suffer? In wading through its 42 chapters one gets the impression that there are various questions asked and answers given, but it is not easy to determine which answer goes with which question. There is also a problem in that the book is both prose (prologue and epilogue) and poetry (the extended dialogue between Job and his friends and finally God himself), and one needs to remember that for the most part when he reads Job he is reading poetry.

What appears to be needless repetition is also a barrier. Job’s three friends, who are assigned the task by the author of trying to convince Job that he is suffering because he has sinned and thus needs to repent, say the same things over and over again, while Job keeps on denying their allegations and refuses to repent since he has nothing to repent of. This goes on page after page, chapter after chapter, to the point of being boring, even if it is supposed to be good poetry for poetry’s own sake. There are some 20 such speeches.

After 30 chapters of this a fourth friend of Job enters the dialogue, youthful Elihu, unexpectedly since he is not previously mentioned. This gives us six more chapters and even more repetition, for Elihu adds nothing new. Elihu’s speeches are generally considered to be a later addition and not a part of the original work. Some scribe along the way felt the urge to put his two-cents worth into the argument, and there is a question as to whether his speeches are worth any more than that.

All these speeches by Job’s friends, along with what Job himself had to say for that matter, raise a question as to what extent this part of the Bible is the inspired word of God. When God finally speaks he burns with anger toward Job’s three friends “for not speaking truthfully about me” and commands them to repent and offer sacrifices for themselves. Job admits that his words had been frivolous and “I had better lay my finger on my lips.”

And yet it is evident that all four men who shared in the extended dialogue said things that we may consider the word of God, some of them being among the most elegant lines in the Bible, such as Eliphaz's words in Job 22:12, "Does not God live at the height of heaven, and see the zenith of the stars," and goes on to speak of God as "he prowls on the rim of the heavens." Great poetry, yes, but great truth as well.

Even though there is much in Job that does not speak truthfully about God, according to God himself, it is nevertheless inspired and it is holy Scripture. It is inspired because it is from God and is not simply a human book. It is holy Scripture because first the Jewish church and then the Christian church esteemed it to be such and made it a part of the canon. And we determine in what way it is the word of God by prayerful study. The book must be viewed in its wholeness. It has lessons to teach us and this is the word of God for us.

But the most baffling aspect of the book of Job is what happens when God at last speaks. No ordinary playwright ancient or modem would have written it the way it reads. Poor Job is bruised and battered all through the ordeal, and he continually begs God for an answer to his plight. His friends talk and talk and talk, but they only add to his misery. As Job's life "trickles away" he at last calls out to God, "I cry to you, and you give me no answer; I stand before you, but you take no notice" (Job 30:20). The reader is moved to pity this good and pious man who has to suffer such agony for no apparent reason. Why? Ah, God at last speaks. Now Job will get his answer! But does he?

It strikes the reader as incredible that God does not so much as even allude to Job's suffering. And that is supposed to be what the book is about. We would expect the Father of the prodigal son to say something like, "Son, I have seen your suffering and I have not been unmindful of your pain." There is nothing at all like that. If J ob had even known that he was being put to the test because of an onset between Yahweh and Satan it would have given some meaning to his suffering, but even this was withheld from him.

Instead "from the heart of the tempest" Yahweh embarks upon a divine soliloquy the sublimity of which hardly occurs anywhere else in sacred literature, in which God is depicted as watching over a vast universe that no one else enters. Instead of being comforted Job is further humiliated as one who has been presumptuous before God. Yahweh says to him, "Who is this obscuring my designs with his empty-headed words? Brace yourself like a fighter; now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me" (Job 38:2).

And what questions they were that Yahweh puts to Job, such as "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" He asked him if he has visited the place where the snow is kept, if rain has a father, and if he has grasped the celestial laws. And in this

outburst of divine eloquence there is depicted both the magnanimity of God and the frailty of man:

Who laid the earth's cornerstone
when all the stars of the morning were singing with joy,
and the Sons of God in chorus were chanting praise?
Who pent up the sea behind closed doors
when it leaped tumultuous out of the womb?

Tell me, since you are so well-informed!

Yahweh goes on with his "answer" in a way we would least expect, plying Job with a list of bewildering questions about numerous animals, some of which are themselves bewildering. Does Job know where the mountain goats give birth, is he the one that makes the warhorse so brave, and does the eagle soar at his command? He even questions him about primeval sea monsters of chaos, such as Leviathan ("Sword may strike him, but cannot pierce him"). Then there is the dreaded Behemoth, perhaps the hippopotamus, who is "the masterpiece of all God's work." He typifies the untameable brute force that only God can master. Can Job catch Behemoth by the eyes or drive a peg through his nostrils?

The reader again meets the unexpected when all this that Yahweh says leads to Job's repentance. The dialogue ends with words seldom uttered by man in the Bible or elsewhere, "I repent." But the reader must distinguish between Job's repentance and what we find in Paul in such places as Romans. Job never accepts the thesis of his three friends, that his troubles were due to his sins, perhaps secret ones. And it is noteworthy that God does not call him a sinner or accuse him as a transgressor.

But still Job repents—of empty-headed thinking, of being presumptuous, and of talking too much; but this was not the kind of sinning his friends accused him of, not the kind to cause him such grief, and not the kind we see in Paul when he says "Sin dwells in me." Job's is not a sin-and-redemption kind of repentance. This is why his statement "I know that IT.)' Redeemer lives, and at last he shall stand upon the earth" (Job 19:25), made famous by its use in Handel's "Messiah," has no reference to redemption from sin or to the Messiah as in Handel's great hymn, but to the hope that God will one day avenge Job's cause as an innocent man.

But still in Job's repentance we have a case of man's basic religious experience. Job at last realizes his own ignorance and his inadequacy before God and turns to Him with a deeper faith. Those are great lines in Job 42:5-6 where Job says that while he once knew *about* God he now knows *Him*.

I knew you then only by hearsay;
but now, having seen you with my own eyes.
I retract all I have said,

and in dust and ashes I repent.

Job docs not mean that he actually had a vision of God, but that he now has a deeper understanding of the nature of God. While his questions have not been answered, he now sees that he cannot call God to account He now accepts by faith what he cannot rationally explain in terms of suffering and death. He had not only talked too much but he had tried to take into his own hands that which must be left only in God's hand.

So the book of Job has an answer to the problem of suffering after all, an answer of sorts. The answer is that there is no answer; the suffering of the righteous must remain a mystery. This is the book's lesson: *We are to accept by faith what we cannot understand by sight.*

In teaching this lesson the book lays down principles that we can live by in our own time. One of the great passages is Job 1:21:

Naked I came from my mother's womb,
naked shall I return.
The Lord gave, the Lord has taken back.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Note the elegance of the poetry in likening the earth to his mother's womb. Job realizes what Paul later realized in 1 Tim. 6:7 that "we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world," facts that we tend to forget. Whatever we have in this world we haven't had it long, nor will we keep it long. Job was once a rich man and he does not disparage riches, but he is recognizing that "We can't take it with us!" and that should influence the way we live.

He thinks of his dear children more than his money when he praises God for both giving and taking back what he gives. He recognizes that everything belongs to God in the first place, and that He has the right to take back what is His, even before Job is through with it. He praises God anyway!

At this point in the story Job can be esteemed for his patience, and the New Testament extols "the perseverance of Job" (Jas. 5:11). James must be drawing upon the early part of the story, as in Job 2:10: "And in all this misfortune Job uttered no sinful word." But Job is sometimes less than exemplary in the dialogue with his friends, and even

comes close to blasphemy in accusing God of being unjust, such as “Will you never take your eyes off me long enough for me to swallow my spittle? Suppose I have sinned, what have I done to you, you tireless watcher of mankind?” (Job 7:19-20)

In this same passage we find the kind of troubled faith that is depicted by Topol in “Fiddler on the Roof.” When Job says, “Why do you choose me as your target? Why should I be a burden to you?,” it is like Topol saying, “Would it spoil some vast, eternal plan if I were a wealthy man?” Are we not all tempted to feel singled out when tragedy strikes? But we do not respond in the same way to good fortune, as if we in some way deserve the good things.

It is here that the book teaches us a profound lesson, that good and evil are concomitant to each other, that one would have no meaning without the other. Indeed, life is made up of both good and evil. Job puts it this way when his wife gets on his case: “Shall we accept good from God and not accept evil” (Job 2:10). Can we expect life to be all happiness with no sorrow? But the book goes beyond this, for it implies that suffering is necessary in order for us to find our way to God. Is this not what the Cross of Christ teaches us in even a profounder way?

The book of Job corrects a misconception that pervades the modem church as well as the old Jewish church, that righteousness will be rewarded (in this world) and wickedness will be punished (in this world). It is one of the themes of the old Wisdom literature, as in Ps. 37:25: “I have been young and I am now old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.”

We can say that this is the way it should be, as we see it, and that it often is this way, but by no means always. The righteous do sometimes have to beg bread, and they are sometimes forsaken, as Job was, and they sometimes face bankruptcy, contract cancer, and die in war and traffic accidents. Moreover, the wicked often get off Scot free, growing old in health and wealth. The preacher complained of this in Ecc. 8:14: “The good receive the treatment the wicked deserve; and the wicked the treatment the good deserve.” The most righteous often have to suffer the most.

Why is this? We do not know; it is a mystery. The book of Job teaches us that the question is not *why* but *when.* When bad things happen to good people they are not to wallow in the labyrinth of why?, why?, why?, but to respond in such a way as to avoid the greater tragedy of not allowing good to come from their suffering. This is the role of simple, trusting, faith. Job could say, “Even though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” We may not understand why the Lord would choose to slay us, but still we are to trust Him for the very good reason that He is God and He loves us and He promises us the victory, if not now then later.

This is why the epilogue, where God restores Job's fortunes, giving him double of all that he had, is not necessary. It in fact creates a problem, for Job's friends could say that their thesis is proved after all, that righteousness is always rewarded. It is all right for the curtain to fall on the drama with Job saying "I repent," leaving him poor and destitute, for it is often that way with the righteous in this world, some having to die agonizing deaths. The lesson is that Job found his way from despair to faith, and that is enough.

I've searched for an illustration that would put all this together. The best I've found is the story of the little boy whose father is a surgeon. When told that his father cuts on people causing them to hurt and bleed, he could not believe it. When allowed to look into the operating room, he saw his father cutting a person open, the blood and all. He was terribly shaken and bewildered by what he saw. But while he could not explain it he was confident that it was all right since it was his father doing it.

That is what the book of Job says to me. Our faith is to have a place for the paradoxes of God, the One who both hides and reveals Himself, the One who creates both good and evil, the One who brings peace and makes wars. It reaches its glorious extravagance in the suffering of Christ on the Cross, the greatest of all mysteries, where the Son of God himself cries out to a God that seems not to hear, "My God, my God. . . Why? . ."

We reach the heart of the message of Job when we can say, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling."—*the Editor*

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CAN WE BE UNITED AND NOT KNOW IT?

In this short article I pose a question that brews in my mind: Might the unity for which our Lord prayed come as subtly and unpredictably as the kingdom itself? Or to put it another way, might unity, like the kingdom, be in our midst and at work among us and we not recognize it? Is the unity for which Jesus prayed real even if not realized?

Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God surely emphasizes the mystery of both its nature and the manner of its coming. He told his disciples that if he cast out demons, which he was doing, then the kingdom was already in their midst (Mt. 12:28). It was like leaven already at work in the dough and like the mustard seed that grows into a great tree (Mt. 13:31-33), which indicates power and mystery as well as subtlety. Yet he says, "The kingdom does not come with observation; nor will they say, . See here!' or . See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Lk. 17:20-21).

The kingdom was already within them and they knew it not! And it did not come in ordinary ways of observation. It did not come in the way their theologians said it must. And yet to Jesus the kingdom was future as well as present. His disciples were to pray "Thy kingdom come." The kingdom is apparently a continuing unfolding reality of the power and wisdom of God.

My question is whether the unity that Jesus prayed for might be that way. If the kingdom of God was a reality amidst Jesus's first followers without their realizing it, might not the unity of the Spirit be ours as a gift without our realizing it?

Unity is not ours to achieve or create. It is not the accomplishment of unity forums or ecumenical conclaves, however important these may be. It is not even ecclesiastical or organizational, such as a merging of churches, though these may result from unity. Can we suppose that unity, like the kingdom, does not necessarily come by observation nor in the ways we might expect? Since unity is the fruit of the Holy Spirit we can liken it unto the wind that comes and goes in ways that we cannot comprehend.

Believers of diverse backgrounds meet to study and pray, drawn together by a mutual devotion to Jesus Christ. Isn't this unity? Churches down the street from each other cooperate in alleviating human suffering both at home and abroad, all in the name of Christ. Isn't this unity. Young people from different denominations have a great time together in the Lord at camp or in redecorating a poor family's home. Isn't that unity? We lend a helping hand to a fellow believer who is hurting, and we see Christ in each other's lives. Isn't that unity?

We can believe that God is already at work answering the prayer of His Son, "Father, may they be one even as we are one." He is at work, like the leaven is at work or like the growing mustard seed, making His people one. It may not be "See, there it is!" at some unity conference, or "See, here it is!" at some ecumenical convention. It may be far more subtle and mysterious in its coming, such as when we start listening to each other and treating each other as equals. It may come when we are on our knees praying for each other. It may come as we hunger and thirst for it deep within our souls. Or simply being in Christ together, however separated by distance and circumstance.

Unity, like the kingdom, is both present and future. It is here and yet it is coming. Like the rose in bud it is yet to bloom with even more glory. And in ways and in a manner that is beyond our fondest dreams and wildest expectations. The ultimate unity of all God's people both in this world and the world to come will thrill our souls beyond description, a kind of "Wow! What an answer to our Lord's prayer! "

But unity, again like the kingdom, comes as we draw upon God's resources to make it come. We are to pray for it, have a passion for it, and work for it. And we are to accept it as a gift of the Holy Spirit, a gift that we share with all those who are in Christ. God is at work in us. He will see that the gift behaves like leaven and like the mustard seed.—*the Editor*

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PURITY OF HEART IS . . .

Blessed are the pure in heart. for they shall see God.—Mt. 5:8

It must be the most glorious promise ever made, one that boggles the mind. The pure in heart shall see God? We are tempted to conclude that Jesus is saying more than he means, for the Bible also says of God, "whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). The Old Testament even says that no one can see God and live. But we are to take our Lord for what he promises. To the extent that finite humanity can look upon the infinite there are some who will see God. Jesus does not have to mean that God, who dwells in unapproachable light will be seen in an absolute sense. Even if we see the outer edges of His majestic glory it will be staggering and incomprehensible. Just the idea of seeing God is too baffling to contemplate.

"Seeing" in Scripture is not always related to vision. If one is allowed to see the face of the king the idea is that he is allowed into the king's presence. Seeing God, therefore, does not have to mean gazing upon Him as one would a sunset, but being in the presence of God or in fellowship with Him. This would give Jesus' promise an immediate relevance in that we "see" God by practicing His presence in our lives and by having fellowship with Him through prayer and meditation, and through the study of the Scriptures. But Jesus' promise to the pure in heart is more than this. It must mean that in God's tomorrow, in a heaven beyond this world, we will, if we are among the pure in heart, see the Creator of the universe in a way far more glorious than anything we experience in this world.

But who can be so bold as to lay claim to a promise that is only for the pure in heart? If this means to have a heart that is free of unclean thoughts and selfish desires and a life free of sin, then who can receive the promise? We are all tainted with selfish pride, envious desires, and carnal thoughts. If by "pure in heart" our Lord was referring to moral perfection, then the promise is not for any of us.

This promise captivated the mind of that old Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, who at last wrote a book on purity of heart. I am persuaded that the theme of that book captures the meaning of what Jesus meant in that beatitude. Kierkegaard put it this way: “Purity of heart is to will one thing. . .” The heart has to do with the will, the desires, the intentions—what one wants above all else. The pure heart is the single heart, without hypocrisy, without folds, nothing hidden. It might be seen in the way one pursues money or fame or some sport—a mind and life set upon one thing. In this context it is, of course, toward God. Purity of heart is to will one thing—to do God’s will. Without reservation and unconditionally. It is sincere, single-eyed devotion and commitment.

This beatitude demands of us self-examination. Are our motives really pure? Is our service to God unmixed? Are we really serving and pleasing ourselves even in the good things we do? William Barclay suggests that this beatitude be rendered: “O the bliss of the man whose motives are absolutely pure, for that man will some day be able to see God.”

Since purity of heart also means to be clean and without defilement, it is clearly something that we cannot do ourselves, sinful as we are. Ps. 51:10 recognizes our dependence on God: “Create in me a clean heart, a God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” That prayer goes on to say, “Do not take your Holy Spirit from me.” The only way we can be clean and pure is for the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us, continually cleansing us. Paul in Philip. 2:13 speaks to this in a remarkable way, “ It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” This seems to say that even our willing, our desiring, our resolving, and all that we do are motivated by God’s presence within us.

While purity of heart is God’s work within us, we are by no means to be passive. One way to put it is that purity of heart means to be like Jesus Christ himself, and there are things that we are to believe and do in order to be like Jesus. 2 Cor. 3:18 says that “we are being transformed” into the likeness of Christ, which shows that it is something done to us and for us, but the same passage says we are to behold the glory of Christ as in a mirror, which means that we are to see ourselves being transformed into his likeness. That means that we have to desire it and seek it—more than anything else. Yes, God is working all this in us, but we in turn are working with him, as Jas. 4:8 indicates: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” In that same verse it says “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.” There is a sense in which we ourselves clean our hands and purify our hearts.

This is beautifully stated in 1 Jn. 3:3: “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” The hope is in what Christ will do when he comes. In nurturing ourselves on such hope we make ourselves pure.

This shows how we cooperate with God in making effective that glorious promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It demands of us all that we are and ever hope to be.—*the Editor*

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WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (3)

It is most unusual for a denomination to confess that it has been wrong, but that happened recently with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. The moderator of the church went before a multiracial conference and apologized in behalf of his denomination for the sin of apartheid, which the church had justified on theological grounds for over 200 years.

This was as daring as it was noble for South Africa's main denomination. It was a repudiation of the church's historic practice of justifying the separation of races on biblical grounds. *We have been wrong!,* the leaders of the church told their people, and they are now lending their influence to bring an end to the sin of apartheid. As a result of this bold move some have left the church and formed a splinter group known as the Afrikaner Protestant Church, which will continue to defend apartheid on theological grounds. But the majority has stood up for the Dutch church's position, seeing it as mandated by the gospel and in keeping with the spirit of Christ.

It is noteworthy that the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church did not simply call for more preaching on grace, brotherly love, and equality between Christians of all races. While that might have kept the boat from rocking too much, it would have been a cop out. They saw that action had to be taken and a sinful tradition reversed. So they publicly repudiated the position of their forebears: *We and our fathers have sinned!*

How noble and courageous of the Dutch Reformed Church! Don't you know that what they did pleased God! Their action will do more to correct the evils of apartheid in South Africa than anything else that has happened. There is power in repentance!

In this series about what my own church must do to be saved I am calling upon the leaders of the Churches of Christ to do as that church in South Africa did, to rise up and say *We have been wrong.* In previous installments I have said that we must confess that we have been wrong in our position on instrumental music, which has set us at odds with every other church in Christendom, including the Christian Churches and Disciples of

Christ who share our own heritage and believe and practice what we do except for instrumental music.

I have made it clear that I do not mean that we should start using instruments in our worship, for that would violate the conscience of many of our people. But we must confess that we have been wrong in making instrumental music a test of fellowship and for saying it is sinful for others to use instruments. It is of course right and proper that we should sing acappella if that is our preference and conviction, but it is wrong for us to make our position a command of God for all others. We must repent and confess that we have been wrong in rejecting other of God's children because of their use of instrumental music. We have made a law where God has not made one, and this is wrong. Let us say it, loud and clear!

I have also said that if the Church of Christ is to be saved as a viable witnessing community to a lost world it must repent and confess its sin of exclusivism and of projecting itself as the only true church. We have in fact sold ourselves a bill of goods, handed down to us by sectarian leaders of the past who should have known better, that we and we only are "The Church of Christ." Early on in our history, back in the days of Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, our motto was "We are Christians only, but not the only Christians." That is right on—biblical, defensible, and even unifying—and that is what our pioneers believed. But since we became the first splinter group of the Stone-Campbell unity movement we have repudiated that slogan by claiming to be the only Christians.

There is a big difference between being Christians only and the only Christians. And it is in that difference that we went wrong. Let's say it, *We have been wrong!* If a denomination in South Africa can do it, we can do it. Let's make it clear that we really believe that wherever God has a child we have a sister or a brother. And that brother or sister doesn't have to see everything eye to eye with us for us to accept him or her as an equal in Christ.

In this installment I am adding another thing we must do to be saved as a people with a message and a mission: We must repent of and confess our sin of internal bickering, debating, and dividing into sects and sub sects. In my home state of Texas we have at least 15 or 20 different kinds of Churches of Christ, large and small, that are at such odds with each other that each considers itself the true church and has no fellowship with any of the others. We have a directory of churches entitled *Where The Saints Meet*, published in Austin, Texas, that lists thousands of our congregations in all 50 states.

But it is a shameful spectacle to behold, for in a sincere effort to list all Churches of Christ the editors felt it necessary, the situation being what it is, to identify each segment with a label all its own—except the "mainline" group, which published the list, which is

not so labeled! And so we have “PM” Churches of Christ, meaning that they are premillennial; we have “NC” churches, meaning no classes, that is, non-Sunday school; we have “NB,” meaning no building; “NI,” meaning non-institutional, “Ch,” meaning charismatic. Then there is OC, OCa, OCb and OCc, as well as OC+c, which attempts to identify five different sects of the one cup (for the Lord’s supper) Churches of Christ, for while they are all one cup they are divided over fermented or unfermented fruit of the vine, breaking of the loaf before serving, classes, and the pastor system.

We must face the fact that this tragic habit of splitting into sects and sub-sects is due largely to a faulty “Restorationist” hermeneutics, which says there is an identifiable pattern for the work and worship of the church which spells out the necessary details, which when adhered to “restores” the true church. Each wing commander sincerely believes he has followed the pattern exactly and has thus restored the true church. This scenario further insists that the other interpretations of the same pattern are false and so their churches are “unfaithful” and cannot be fellowshipped. So, our divisions have no end. Since 1894 when Churches of Christ separated from the Disciples of Christ we have further fragmented at least once each decade. In some cities in the South there are as many as eight or ten “faithful” Churches of Christ, none of which have any fellowship with the others.

A fallacy that accompanies the pattern-blueprint concept is one that makes unity among believers impossible, for it holds that to be united and enjoy fellowship with each other we have to see all these things alike. Oddly enough, the leaders of our factions dismiss “unity in diversity” as a false doctrine, which by definition that is the only kind of unity that is possible since there is no way for everyone to see everything alike. Whether in a marriage, in nature, or in Christ the only kind of unity there is is a unity in diversity. True unity finds its center in a common devotion to Jesus Christ. The common life we are to share, which is what fellowship means, is a matter of each member of the Body “holding fast to the Head” in spite of differences. We don’t have to agree on everything or practice everything alike in order to love and accept each other as equals in Christ.

To be saved as a people who can be taken seriously we must show a disdain and an intolerance for our ugly divisions. While it helps, we must do more than preach peace, love, and unity. We must repent of our sins of division and confess that we have been wrong. Like that church in South Africa, we would do well to call a convention for the express purpose of confessing our sin of being one of the most divided, sectarian churches in America.

We need to write out a “Proclamation of Repentance” that would say something like, “Whereas, we have sinned against our Lord’s prayer for the unity of all his followers by becoming a factious and divided people; and whereas, we have sinned against the mandate

of the holy Scriptures and the holy apostles in their plea for unity; and whereas, we have sinned against our own heritage as a unity people; we do hereby confess our sin and ask for each other's forgiveness, the forgiveness of the larger Christian community, and the forgiveness of Almighty God; and we hereby declare that we repudiate our divisive ways, and are resolved to take the following steps to correct the erroneous course taken by our fathers and by our-selves. . ."

Such a proclamation could circulate as a petition among the churches. It would be signed by thousands. Let it at last be read at our lectureships, on college campuses, in the churches, and let it be published in our journals. Let this be followed by a day of prayer and fasting. Let the press carry the news to the world that we are fed up with our divisions, we repudiate them now and forever, and that we are henceforth a unity people once again.

Nothing has to change in regard to our differences. We can have churches that are premillennial and those that are amillennial, along with many that don't even know what millennialism is about. We can have brethren who support the cooperative radio-TV Herald of Truth program and never watch it and those who are opposed to it but never miss it. We can have Sunday school churches and non-Sunday school churches, as well as those who serve the Supper in ways that differ. We don't have to be of one mind on all such issues in order to be one in Christ. In fact, we are already one in Christ. That happened when we were baptized into Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit which is what makes us one.

It is therefore a matter of realizing our oneness and repudiating our factionalism. It is a matter of loving and accepting each other even as Christ loves and accept us. It is a matter of obeying holy Scripture:"Receive one another even as Christ has received you, to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7). This means that we can and do differ on opinions and methods so long as we are united on the basics of the faith—and we are united on the essentials, which makes workable the trusted old motto, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, love."

To be saved as a witnessing church we must show the world how we love one another. No more debating and fussing and dividing. Like Thomas Campbell, we must become sick and tired of the whole sectarian mess. We will show our unity by our love, by our love, by our love. Jesus assures us in Jn. 13:35 that this is how the world will know that we are truly his disciples—not by dotting every "I" and crossing every "T" in doctrinal conformity—but by our love one for another.

Are you ready to sign the proclamation?—*the Editor*

We are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a featherbed.—*Thomas Jefferson*

THE FORBIDDEN PRAYER

Cecil Hook

When his disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he recited to them a brief prayer which is used universally by Christians and is called *The Lord's Prayer.* In the Church of Christ generaly, however, we have been turned away from using that prayer. Because of our aversion to that petition, I suspect that most of us would have difficulty in repeating it from memory.

Two objections have been put forth in our effort to prohibit the use of Jesus' prescribed model: (1) We cannot rightly pray "Thy kingdom come" because the kingdom came on Pentecost and we are in it, and (2) It is not prayed "in Jesus' name" as Jesus later taught us to pray. Let us question the validity of each of those objections.

From reading the gospels, we learn that the disciples looked for an earthly restoration of the national kingdom of Israel throughout his ministry and also after the resurrection of Jesus. Even though in their misunderstanding the disciples evidently prayed for a national kingdom, God did not reject their prayers. He established his spiritual kingdom anyway. In view of their willingness to let God's will be done in their lives, God accepted their petitions, We can gain confidence that he will also hear our prayers even when we do not fully understand that for which we ask.

Because we have been inclined to limit the identity of the kingdom to the church on earth, we have failed to appreciate the broader concept of the kingdom. The kingdom of God will come in its completeness only in the next world. Evidently, Jesus was teaching his disciples to pray that the kingdom would be established and also attain its fullness or maturity which will be accomplished only when it is delivered up to the Father.

In poetic fashion the Jews used many parallelisms where a thought is repeated in slightly different words. Jesus used this literary device when he said, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done." Those statements mean the same thing essentially. And both clauses are modified by "on earth as it is in heaven."

The kingdom of God is the ruling of God in the hearts of his people. When his will is being done, God is ruling. The purpose of God is never done fully on earth, but in heaven his reign is perfected. On earth we still have sin, sorrow, pain, and death because the will

of God is not accomplished in its fulness here, but those things do not prevail in heaven. It should be our constant prayer that we grow toward that mature state on earth. In our individual efforts to let him rule, we ask for our daily sustenance, forgiveness of sins, and God's help in withstanding temptation.

In consideration of this desire to allow God to reign, should we not pray, "Thy kingdom come"? This, by the way, in no way supports the concept of a premillennial reign of Christ on earth for which many sincere disciples pray.

Now let us consider the matter of praying "in Jesus' name."

"Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything in my name, I will do it" (Jn. 14:13f). Other passages also emphasize that promise of Jesus. What does that mean? Is this some sort of password without which our prayers never reach the Father? Is it a part of a formula for a ritual of prayer?

In the name of someone means "by the authority of' or "in behalf of' the person whose name is used. Jesus has mediated the way back to the Father so that when we are in him, there is no longer an alienation. Coming by the authorization of Jesus we have a direct access to the Father. In Christ we are also in the Father and the Spirit is in us in a reconciled state. Our whole life is given to the Father *in his name!*

In his name—by his authorization and in his behalf—we baptize (Acts 2:38), we sing (Eph. 5:18f), we gather (Mt. 18:20), and "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through him" (Col. 3:17). That is all-inclusive (!) and has nothing to do with saying "in Jesus' name" at the end of a petition. It means that our whole lives are dedicated to God through him in whom we are now reconciled to the Father. Jesus does not relay our requests to the Father; we now have direct access to him.

If the Lord's Prayer had been given to us for a rote prayer in a ritual, the wording recorded by Matthew and Luke would necessarily have been identical, but they are not (Mt 6:9f; Lk. 11:1f). But the prayer can still be offered, even in unison, by thoughtful disciples in a manner far more expressive than a ritual. If we wish to expand our prayer, we can still see in Jesus' prayer an outline to follow. It seems strange, however, that he did not include thanksgiving in the prayer.

Simplistic answers most always overlook deeper meanings. Our marking the Lord's Prayer as a prohibited petition has deprived us of some richer spiritual insights.—*1350 Huisache. New Braunfels. Tx. 78130*

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Alexander Campbell On Moral Law

The universe is founded upon a moral idea. God did not create the universe because he had wisdom to *design* it. He did not create the universe because he had *power* to create it. For both wisdom and power are passive instruments. Goodness alone is necessarily, eternally, immutably active. It is essentially and perpetually communicative. It is communicative when it radiates and when it attracts. It is the cause of all motion. But for it, nothing would ever have been. The universe is, therefore, a necessary existence. *It must be, because God was.* It must be, because Jehovah was God—the absolute Good One.—*Popular Addresses. p. 164*

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TRUE UNITY

Bill Henry

The ideal of unity wasn't thought up by some mere human, whether he be poet, politician, or philosopher. Rather, unity is pointed out in Scripture as being at the very heart of God's eternal purpose for the whole of His creation. Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that unity is the Lord's desire for his followers. In fact, the hallmark of Jesus' intercessory prayer in John 17 is the plea He makes for unity: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn. 17:20f NIV).

In Paul's view as revealed in Ephesians the unity for which Christ prayed is a present reality in the Body of Christ. As the apostle indicates: "God placed all things under (Christ's) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph. 1:22f).

Paul goes on to say in Eph. 2:4f: "God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions," and then in Eph. 2:13: "The Gentiles, who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." He goes on to show that Jews and Gentiles were made "one new man," thus making peace. So, they were both reconciled in one body through the Cross.

All of this is unity created, not by our own doing, but by the Spirit of God. This is the unity that we are to make every effort to keep in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

In saying all this to the church at Ephesus the apostle did not suggest that they devise some formula to bring about unity. He rather urges them "to live a life worthy of the calling you have received," and this included humility, gentleness, patience, forbearing love, and "to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

This is the only way in which Christians can and do experience unity, and it is a unity of love, rich and diverse. As each of us is more aware of the Spirit's presence and leading, we shall take the necessary steps to make our unity more open and expressive, and it will become more apparent to the world. We will no longer build walls that separate us. We will all put loyalty to Christ first.

In all this we will respect the convictions of those who differ with us. We will not dive headlong towards a superficial unity based on the lowest common denominator of someone's opinion. Rather our unity will be based on the highest common denominator, Jesus Christ himself, and a renewed understanding of the Biblical message. This is the true unity which is already ours in the Lord.—*Church of Christ. 2329 Liberty St., Trenton. NJ 08629*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

I would like to hear from you in reference to my current series on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved. Write to me, pro or con, and let me know what you think:, and I would like permission to publish your response. This is an issue that merits free and open discussion.

We run a tight ship at our house these days. I rise each a.m. about 6 and put on my togs for my two-mile run down Windsor Dr., but before I leave I awake Ouida and we ease Mother Pitts to the bathroom. Ouida goes back to bed for awhile longer while I run, after which I go to my study for scheduled reading, which is presently in and about the Old Testament. Ouida comes after awhile and says, "By the time we get mother in her chair breakfast will be ready." After breakfast Ouida feeds her mother, which, with a syringe, takes a long time, while I return to my study. The mail takes a lot of time, and two days a week I prepare for classes at Dallas Christian College, which I greatly enjoy, especially when I can use my own history book as a text as I am doing this term. I often have lunch at the college with interesting friends; sometimes I have lunch with Ouida at home and sometimes I lunch with some friend in Denton. There are always the phone calls, and

writing this paper each month is no small task. Ouida finds time to mail out books, make deposits, answer some mail, keep records, and ride herd on the subscription list, which gives her a good excuse to play with the computer. Once I compose the material for an issue of this paper, Ouida puts it on our page maker. We then take it out to be laser printed, which makes it just as you see it except it is in 20 separate sheets. Now photo-ready, we turn it over to the printer. Then it has to be prepared for mailing, which takes most of two days.

When I am gone for days and even weeks at a time, which through the years has been often, Ouida has to do even more, and someone has to come in to help her with her mother. At noon we take Mother Pitts from her lift chair and put her back to bed. In the meantime Ouida diapers her, bathes her, and pampers her. We get her up again about 5 p.m., or whenever I get back from Dallas. Ouida prepares the evening meal. While I wash the dishes she again feeds her mother, always something of an ordeal. In the evening I am sometimes gone, or I am back to my study or doing my thing at the computer. I never catch up on the mail, not in 39 years! Ouida can now relax, except that company may come, or she needs to listen to someone on the phone, or she needs to iron, or sew for her daughter or grandson, or serve as barber for several men (The last time the grandson came for a haircut he brought along a friend, “Grandma, can you cut his hair too?”). About 10 p.m. we put Mother Pitts back in bed. We retire, thanking the God of heaven for “life, breath, and all things”—including each other.

MCC-Dallas is building the Cathedral of Hope, which will be the largest church of its kind in the world—an outreach to Gays and Lesbians. During 1990 they added 220 members and had 1,900 visitors. They have announced a gala Easter service to be held in a theater in downtown Dallas. They do not lack for innovative ideas, such as plans for “Parking Lot Fellowship Hours” and “Street Dances.” In their bulletin they describe themselves as people who live in a perpetual war zone, rejected by their families, condemned by the church, persecuted by the state, assaulted by bullies, and plagued by a devastating disease. They have a viable ministry to AIDS victims. The Church of Christ I attend received a request that it minister to an AIDS victim here in Denton. I was asked to call on him. The day I visited him his father was being buried that very hour. He did not attend the funeral (at a Church of Christ) because his family did not want him around. Ouida prepared a Thanksgiving dinner for him and I took it to his bedside. He had only a cat for company. Now in Dallas dying of his disease in a facility supported in part by MCC-Dallas, he wrote us a letter of appreciation. He was both pleased and surprised that anyone in the church would not only visit with him but even bring him a plate of food.

Some of our readers who attended the Abilene Christian U. Lectureship report that they felt winds of change blowing across the campus. Not only did the lectures and classes themselves reflect more openness, but the conversations under the big tent revealed that our people are moving away from the obscurantism of the past and are looking for a new day for Churches of Christ. Cecil Hook for one, who had a booth under the tent, wrote that, “I should have had a recorder to capture the mentions of your name by those who came by for a visit at the booth. Change continues to accelerate. People are being more outspoken all along. I had only one negative response while at Abilene.” An east Texas reader reported, ‘They are now saying what you and Carl Ketcherside were saying 30 years ago.” Well, it doesn’t matter who speaks up for a free and responsible church so long as they speak up, right? It is the “Confession” that I am looking for (read my series on what the Church of Christ Must Do to Be Saved) and I hope we don’t have to wait 30 years for that.

One of our California readers responded to our recent essay on staying out of debt (including churches) by sending us this amusing quote from John Ruskin, which we pass along to you: “Don’t get into debt. Starve and go to heaven—but don’t borrow. Try first begging—I don’t mind if it’s really needful—stealing! But don’t buy things you can’t pay for! And of all manner of debtors pious people building churches they can’t pay for, are the most detestable non-sense to me. Can’t you preach and pray behind the hedges—or in a sandpit—or a coalhole first?”

While I am not a pacifist (though I suppose every Christian is in some sense a pacifist), I appreciate the historic and ongoing concern for peace on the part of Quakers. Since Ouida and I regularly contribute to the humanitarian work of the American Friends Service Committee all around the world, to friend and foe alike, I received a letter from them about the Gulf war, part of which I quote: “This is a sad time for all pacifists. The outbreak of war in the Gulf represents a massive failure of governments, political leaders and international institutions. The AFSC believes deeply that war could have been averted; it must be ended before the imperatives of warfare become fully en-trenched.” While I think most of us would agree with the ideal of “No war-period!,” it is a question of whether we can avert war in a world of Adolf Hitlers and Saddam Husseins. But still we need those who adamantly hold to the ideal without compromise, and we appreciate the Quakers for this. I find myself closer to the Quakers than to the Baptist group in Texas, who sent me a copy of the letter they sent President Bush, part of which I quote: “Many of us in these parts salute you and our military in the recent bombing of the so-called ‘bomb shelter.’ We endorse this hit! We suggest you give them a brief warning to get out of that Baghdad hotel, then level it. We also urge you to consider the use of nuclear weapons. Whatever you do, eliminate Saddam Hussein!”

The Gateway Restorationist Unity Forum has recently been organized in St. Louis, consisting of folk from Independent Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and Disciples of Christ. In a recent organizational meeting they decided to have a public event next October 12 at St. Louis Christian College with participants from all three churches. For more information write the Disciples of Christ office, Box 277, Festus, Mo. 63028, or call 314-933-0394.

A cassette tape has been sent free gratis to 3,610 Church of Christ ministers. The Belmont Church in Nashville (once a Church of Christ) spent $10,000 on this "Renewal in Action" project. The tape is a sermon by Jack Deere, a "Charismatic," on "God's Power For Today's Church." The Belmont Church's outreach to Churches of Christ included a well-attended breakfast program in an off-campus facility during the ACU lectures, during which Don Finto and Jim Bevis, both former Church of Christ ministers, spoke. Since leaving Churches of Christ, Don Finto has moved up higher, having now proclaimed himself an apostle.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

Your readers will be sad, indeed, when *Restoration Review* no longer shows up in our mail boxes, but we all understand that a lot of effort is required on your and Ouida's part, and that you deserve a rest and a change of pace. It has been a great work and you will leave a great legacy. It continues to be a challenging and inspiring publication and I am sure it will be through the last issue.—*Don Owens, Laguna Niguel, Ca.*

I can't believe that you are on your last two years. I am not worried about you, however, for you have a real facility for making the most out of your life.—*Max Foster, Arkansas City, Ks.*

I am 84 years old and have been a member of the Church of Christ for 50 years. I have enjoyed your magazine. It has helped me search and understand the scriptures better. —*M. T. Fort, Oxford, Fl.*

For years I have been struggling to leave the Church of Christ due to a lack of freedom in Christ. We preach that salvation is not by works, but our doctrine and behavior prove otherwise. I can no longer worship with those who believe that a piano is not only a sin but an unpardonable one. I will no longer tolerate those who believe that we are the

only ones saved, and that all good Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, and other God-fearing people are bound for hell. I will no longer listen to preachers who have to apologize for preaching salvation by grace. The silly things that divide us are pathetic. In my community of 55,000 there are six to ten Churches of Christ, all divided. One church is known for not eating in the building. One church I grew up in disfellowshipped my sister because she married a divorced man. She never steps in the door of one of our churches. I would have left long ago, but I stayed out of hope for change. It is not for everyone to stay.—*Indiana (Name and address withheld)*

I am amazed that Freed-Hardeman allowed my friends Bob Randolph from M.I.T. and Lynn Mitchell from the Bering Drive church in Houston even to open their mouths on the subject of women in the church. Change has even hit Freed-Hardeman! It was your alma mater that allowed two men to say that men and women are equal, and men are not more equal than women. You will have to read the book that came out of this, *Gender and Ministry*, FHU, 1990.—*Norman Parks, Murfreesboro, Tn.*

I enjoyed your comments on simplicity. They reminded me of a statement made by my homiletics teacher. “Boys,” he said, “don’t try to say anything profound, just try Nor to say anything stupid.”—*Paul DuBois, Arlington, Tx.*

It is hard for me to believe that I just accepted the things I heard about you and Ketcherside. I am sorry that it took me so many years to get my eyes opened. I praise God that I’m now free in Christ and no longer the judge of others. Thanks to Cecil Hook, Charles Holt, and Leroy Garrett that I and many others freed from legalism can now go to the Word and let it speak to us in spite of our traditions. I have had the privilege of personally thanking Hook and Holt, and I pray that I might one day be able to thank you personally. But if I don’t, please know that I am grateful for the work you have done and the blessings it has brought to so many people, including myself. Praise God!—*Doyce Hall, Little Rock, Ar.*

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BOOK NOTES

I am sorry to report that *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett is now out of print. It has sold so well through the years that its publisher may decide to reprint it, perhaps a revised edition since some of the material could be updated. We will keep you informed.

Ouida and I are now reading aloud to each other, an old custom of ours, a new book by our friend J. Harold Thomas. It is a novel on the life of the prophet Isaiah, titled *Shear-jashub: Son of Isaiah.* Shearjashub, whose name means "a remnant shall return," tells of his life growing up in a Jewish home where the father was a prophet. This novel is an entertaining way to become better acquainted with what the book of Isaiah is about, including all the international political intrigue. Ouida is impressed with Harold Thomas' skillful and resourceful handling of complex materials. We will send you a copy for $8.95.

We would appreciate your helping us to place this paper in the hands of more readers for our last two years. If you agree to pass them along to prospective readers, we will send you free gratis a fistful of recent issues.

Our bound volume for 1989-90, titled *The Hope of the Believer,* is now at the bindery and will be ready in a few weeks. If you place your order with us, we will send you a copy with invoice enclosed. The price will be $12.50 plus postage. There are six other bound volumes, from 1977-88, except for 1979-80, which are available for $58.00 for all six.

You will find Paul Butler's *What The Bible Says About Civil Government* helpful in reference to questions about civil authority, the state and the individual, church and state. $14.95 postpaid.

We promote the novels by Louis Cochran about our pioneers, for they always are appreciated as an interesting way to study our history. There is *The Fool of God* on the life of Alexander Campbell, which makes for great reading; and *Raccoon John Smith,* the story of the famed Kentucky backwoods preacher. They are $11.95 each, postpaid.

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